Yukon

Government of Yukon

Yukon Government NEWS release

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Yukon Government Supports Ramesh Ferris in Cross-Canada Journey

WHITEHORSE - Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers today announced the Yukon government will support the efforts of a local man to raise awareness of the importance of immunization and work towards the goal of eradicating polio by matching up to $50,000 of Yukon-raised donations, for the Cycle to Walk Society. This funding is in addition to $15,000 previously provided by the Department of Health and Social Services as a direct contribution.

Ramesh Ferris, a polio survivor, begins his cross-Canada journey April 12, to make his way from Victoria, B.C. to Newfoundland, by hand cycle. There will be a ceremonial start in Whitehorse April 10 prior to leaving for Victoria. The tour will raise funds for global immunization by the PolioPlus Foundation; educate Canadians about polio and the importance of continued immunization here and abroad; and support rehabilitation of polio survivors in third world countries.

"I believe it is important to support Mr. Ferris in his journey, and to raise public awareness of the importance of immunization as the best means of protecting children and adults from communicable diseases," Cathers said.

"The SARS crisis was a demonstration of how contagious diseases can

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spread around the world in 24 hours, thanks to modern-day travel. Mr. Ferris's personal commitment to hand cycling across Canada provides us an opportunity to encourage Yukoners to take advantage of our immunization program to protect themselves and their families," the minister said.

Dr. Allon Reddoch, President of the Ramesh Ferris Cycle to Walk Society, said the group has plans for monies raised by the campaign.

"Obviously this is a cause dear to Ramesh's heart, and obviously to ours as well, both at the local and national level," Reddoch said. "We can save so many children from the devastating effects of polio with this money. We appreciate the support of the Yukon Government for this important initiative."

After 20 years of massive immunization efforts, polio has been 99 per cent eradicated but it remains endemic in four countries: Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Polio is a highly infectious disease that primarily affects children under the age of three, and can cause paralysis within hours. In 1985, Rotary International began its "PolioPlus – Immunize Children of the World Campaign" aimed at polio, red measles, diphtheria, and whooping cough.

According to the World Health Organization's Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, immunization is the most cost-effective health intervention there is. By advocating immunization to Canadians, beginning with Yukoners, the Cycle to Walk campaign aims to help reduce health care costs for polio and other preventable diseases.

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